As the Circus Sees Them

The biggest shows in the country often play in towns so small that they never see the cheap, fly-by-night theatrical combinations, writes Tody Hamilton in the Washington Star. Yet circus day will see from 10,000 to 30,000 visitors there, most of whom come in farm wagons and other road vehicles, although in recent years the interurban trolley lines throughout the country have greatly facilitated the gathering of these crowds.

Your farmer almost invariably has money laid aside for circus day. So in an inland country town on show day you will see the real vertebrae of the Union.

It is immediately after seed time or after harvest that the showman has fixed to come and separate the farmer from this money. On that particular morning the roads leading to the county seat are lively with wagons, buggies and pedestrians, and a cloud of dust a mile in length on a still summer's day hovers over the highways and byways. In the town the courthouse square is packed with vehicles, the horses having been taken out and stabled elsewhere. The owners and their families, covered with dust, lounge in the hot sun or beneath the store awnings, panting, or race up and down impatiently, waiting for the parade.

As soon as that event is over they betake themselves to the wagons under the trees—for there is no place elsewhere to sit down—and eat their basket dinner with their children and sweethearts; then for the circus grounds, all the time in a cloud of dust, pushing, sweating and chattering, and keeping a hand on their money.

They surround the ticket wagons an hour before sales begin, so as to get in first; and when the ticket sellers make their appearance the people form such a rush and crush as may be elsewhere seen only at the doors of a broken bank. In their intense excitement and distrust of the showman they will frequently hold their money with so tight a fist that the ticket sellers have to crack them over the knuckles to get it.

"Let go your money!" "Give up your money!" is the steady cry of the ticket sellers. Now and then it is broken by: "Get your change!" "Here, you, take your change!" For men and women, having finally given up forget their change and have to fight their way back again through the struggling mass in order to get it. Some never get it, and the ticket sellers with the brass trough before them full of silver and bills up to their knees on the floor are so much to the good.

This left over change more than offsets the losses from bad coin and bills put on the ticker men. As the former is raked from the windoww upon a brass plate below, the false sound quickly betrays the spurious coin; there is nothing but the quick eye and the experienced touch to protect the lightning ticket seller from counterfeit bills. He often gets stuck, for he must make good personally. The honest farmer is not always averse to this method of getting rid of his bad money.

The distance covered by many of these circus-goers seems incredible. Of course we bill the railroads for fifty miles in every direction and get excursion rates. A fifty-mile railroad ride for people who never ride that much all the rest of the year is merely a picnic—a pleasant excursion—with another amusement at the end of it. But what would you say of a couple of fellows from a West Virginia village driving forty miles to the railroad station, riding fifty miles to a junction with the main line and then many miles further to see the show at Wheeling? After the last performance they took the next train back, sleeping in their seats and getting back home after five days on the road. I saw this in my last season, and I have heard of many similar hardships braved for a single three hours under the big tents.

In the bicycle period we used to have a tent purposely to check and store the machines of those who used that means of getting to town, and they used to come twenty and twenty-five miles by wheel. Out west it is a common thing for farm boys who have worked behind a team all day to walk four or five miles to view a night prformance, and then walk back home again at midnight, the horses getting the only rest.

The circus press agent sees more of these people than any other living man in it, not excepting the other employes of the circus—who are too busy to sit up and take notice. In those later years on the road I have discovered a rapid thinning out of the clean-cut, impressive American features. Even in New England, outside of Boston, the change is conspicuous. In some New England manufacturing towns like Woonsocket, R. I., Fall River and Lowell, Mass., the great majority are foreign born, with many Welsh and French Canadians. Our fabled fishing fleets of Gloucester are nine-tenths Canadians and Scandinavians in personnel.

It is now only in the back towns and villages and in the true country of New England that the pure native American blood is visible everywhere and you are still reminded of Brother Jonathan. The foreign manufacturing influx has been so great and the assimilation has been so complete that a new race has practically taken the place of the traditional Yankee.

Only the south has measurably escaped this amalgamation, and one must travel through the Carolinas and Georgia to find the true American breed, in form, face, speech and spirit. One may travel for days in the North and West among the common people and hear about every language of the civilized world but one's own, especially in the smoking car. Any one may notice if he will, that the list of the killed and injured in any railroad accident in these sections invariably contains principally foreign names.

Of course, the most casual traveler has observed the marked differences between the peoples of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Boston. There are fundamental reasons for this difference. But how about Rochester and Buffalo? And why should there be a difference between the newer cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis? I have gone from a town like Columbus, Ohio, to a town like Cleveland and marveled at the difference between every class of their respective inhabitants.

Go some ten miles form Goshen to Elkhart, Ind.,—both in the same county and on the same trunk lines of railroad—and you can observe the same thing. The towns and their inhabitants have their own individual characteristics. Why? There is always a reason. One is a railroad and manufacturing town, the other an agricultural town, with few manufactures. The manufacturing town always differs materially from the agricultural town. Not only are the people different, but their business methods are different.

As a rule agricultural towns present a more even and substantial prosperity. The pawnbroker thrives only in manufacturing towns, where periodical strikes and constantly changing commercial conditions as constantly disturb all lines of business and all social spheres. There are more poverty, immorality and general misery in manufacturing places, more disturbances of a social order.

Squalor and ignorance and vice rule mining towns, where usually three or four very rich people live in palaces, and three or four thousand very poor are jumbled together like pigs in a sty.

Certain racial distinctions are very plainly visible in certain states. The Frenchman and the German have left an absolute record of their nationality, and the Spaniard and the Slavs are marked in certain sections with equal distinctness. In every Mississippi river town the traces of the French settlers remain indelibly in the architecture, names and characteristics of the people. The women there are the Parisian types—slender, round-waisted, lithe, graceful. The manners are French manners—polite, gracious, most considerate of strangers and sudden and severe in quarrel. The old warehouses along the river, the levees, where once the fast packets excited the admiration of the populace, are warehouses and landing places that might have been transported bodily from the Seine and Loire.

Yet while general characteristics may be thus easily accounted for, there are special differences between the townspeople of the same sections of country. The physical difference the traveler sees readily; what the moral and mental differences are may be approximated only by a study of their respective surroundings.

I used to stop regularly in front of the local photograph galleries, where a frame set with portraits of local people is always hung out. In one town could be seen broad features, thick lips and robust noses; in another delicate features, the saucy Irish nose and patrician chin and mouth; in the next a prevailing of face, with fair hair and blue eyes and heavy forehead; in the next the hawk-like Indian cast of countenance suggestive of the early Georges.

In Norfolk, Va., for instance, one will meet many tall, slender, willowy women of a refined English type of features. In Georgia and Alabama there are to be found the same delicate complexions to be met in Wisconsin and northern Michigan. But in the lake regions the eyes of the people are smaller, owing, probably, to the high winds and snows of winter, and eyeglasses are as prevalent there as in New England.

There are certain towns where the women are particularly good looking, other towns where the rule is exactly the reverse. A dozen different types of negroes may be counted in the South. The French-speaking negro of Louisiana is as widely from the Virginia article as could well be, and the South Carolina and the cotton belt negro differ as widely from each other as from the other two varieties.

The Charleston negro often has a well shaped head and straight nose, while the negro from the Kongo has a low mental development and flat noes. The various negro types are due to the unprejudiced views of the Yankee slave-traders as to where to catch their load of "blackbirds," on the African coast.

A dirty town almost always has dirty people—dirty in person, dirty in morals and dirty in business dealings. A clean, well-built, thriving little city, with agreeable surroundings, produces an intelligent, thrifty and agreeable people, of clean habits, clean morals, and fair and sound business principles. Or, is it that the character of the town springs from its inhabitants? Anyhow, I have always found that they go together. They fit.

Show me an ill-arranged, badly-built, filthy, smoky, cheerless town, of which you may find some in almost every state in the Union, and I will show you an ignorant, low-lived, sordid community, where, if you are going to do business, you'd better keep both eyes open and both hands on your pocketbook.

There are two other unfailing indications of the character of a town and its people. These are its hotels and newspaper offices. They are the first thing I study when I hit the place. The conduct of the hotel you stop at shows the local idea of decent, everyday life. The character of the newws paper offices indicates the degree of local intelligence and culture. I have found them almost certain guides. If the best hotel is mean, dirty and poorly conducted, my prejudice begins to work. When I find the newspaper office poor and half asleep, that settles it. I am ready then to classify that community, for have I not had hundreds of examples to insure my conclusion.

There are a few exceptions to this rule, the reasons for which in each case are readily apparent. Such newspaper offices are almost invariably associated in my mind with hotels to match—and poor show business.

India's Filmy Muslin.

Another story is told of a weaver who was "chastised and turned out of Dacca for his neglect in not preventing a cow from eating a piece of muslin spread to dry on the grass, she mistaking it for a spider's web." Bolts records the story about a Mogul princess whose father was "angry with his daughter for showing her skin through her clothes, whereupon the young princess remonstrated in her justification that she had seven suits on!"—Indian World.

Most of our blessings have such a thin sugar coating that the bitterness is always tasting through.

Man With 32 Automobiles

As contributors to the record of life tragedies in the United States automobiles now outrank cyclones, shipwrecks on the great lakes and the bubonic plague. According to a coupt kept by the Chicago Tribune 1,568 persons were killed or seriously injured by the road locomotives in 1907. Fatalities increased more than fifty per cent., 324 persons having been killed outright, as compared with 200 in 1906. The increase in the number injured was almost equally appalling. Where 851 were severely hurt in 1906, last year's total was 1,244, this count including only those cases reported in the newspapers. That these figures are far from being complete is indicated by statistics compiled in Massachusetts, showing that in three months ending September 21 there were 41 deaths caused by automobiles in that State alone.

New York's record of "accidents" is equal to that of Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, Baltimore and Cleveland, with a total population of more than six million, combined. Forty-eight persons were killed in this city in the course of the year the record of death and destruction is being fully maintained. In the first twenty days of January automobile "accidents" chronicled in the Herald killed five, fatally injured five more and hurt nineteen other persons.

When it is remembered that automobiles are dangerous only when recklessly driven, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that this deplorable record of maiming and killing is almost wholly due to the widespread and increasing disregard of speed regulations. Perhaps no one can consistently wonder that automobiles are recklessly driven or that speed laws are constantly violated when no one is ever punished, except by a paltry fine. It is on record that more than one hundred persons have been killed and three times that number injured in and around New York in the last three years, and if any one has yet served out a sentence in jail for even the most wantonly reckless driving, resulting in death or injury to others, the case has escaped the attention of horsemen.

One of the chief obstacles in the way of preventing automobile "accidents" seems to be a lack of realization as to what constitutes reckless driving. Because a machine can be stopped more quickly than a horse going at the same rate of speed a great many automobilists assume that it is safe for them to drive faster than horses can lawfully go. But the speeders forget that the hoofbeats of the horse always give warning of his approach, while the automobile, running noiselessly on rubber tires, often makes no sign until too late. It steals upon its victim literally like a thief in the night, and it is just this treacherous silence of approach which puts a far greater burden of care upon the chauffeur than on the coachman and calls for greater precaution in operating an automobile on the highways.

Interesting and important statistics bearing on this point were recently compiled in England by the secretary of the Highways Protection League, an organization calfed into existence by the alarming increase of fatalities on English roads since the introduction of automobiles. He notes that it is impossible to compare the number of accidents caused by horse drawn vehicles and automobiles respectively, as the number of the former is unknown, but a comparison is made with regard to cabs and omnibuses from the figures given in the report of the London Commissioner of Police.

This report shows that the number of licensed horse buses is 2,964, and of motor buses 783, the former thus outnumbering the latter by almost four to one. It shows also that the number of persons killed by the buses in one year was 39, and that the number injured was 1,244. Now if all buses were equally safe or equally dangerous, the 783 motor buses must have killed about ten persons and injured about three hundred, while the horse drawn would have killed about twenty-nine and injured about nine hundred and forty. But the police report shows that the 783 motor vehicles killed 25 and injured 824, thus doing more than two and one-half times their share of the damage, while the 2,964 horse buses were responsible for but 14 of the 39 deaths and for only 420 of the 1,244 injuries, or a good deal less than one-half their fair allowance. So that whereas there was only one accident for every seven horse buses in use the number of persons injured by motor buses was greater than the whole number of motor buses licensed.

In the face of figures like these horse owners and others who uses the highways will hardly consent to loosening up the speed laws, as proposed by a bill now before the legislature at Albany, so that automobiles can lawfuly go tearing through the country at unlimited speed, leaving in their wake a trail of dust and devastation and making it even more unsafe than it now is to venture out with a horse and carriage.—New York Herald.